

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 PC-01 AID-05 TRSE-00 MCT-01
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R 171126Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7328
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, PFOR, TH
SUBJECT: SAMAK SPEAKS TO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB

REF: (A) BANGKOK 33412 (NOTAL), (B) BANGKOK 33555 (NOTAL),
(C) BANGKOK 33927 (NOTAL), (D) BANGKOK 33414 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: IN LUNCHEON MEETING AT FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' CLUB OF THAILAND (FCCT) ON DEC 17, MINISTER OF INTERIOR SAMAK SUNTHORAWET ANSWERED QUESTIONS FROM CORRESPONDENTS (HE DID NOT HAVE PREPARED REMARKD) ABOUT HIS STATEMENT THAT VIETNAMESE WOULD INVADE THAILAND ON FEB 15, 1977; REFUGEES; THE EVENTS OF OCT 6; AND THE RECENT ARREST OF A JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT. MOST OF HIS REMARKS WERE A REPEAT OF WHAT HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN REPORTED, BUT REFLECT HIS DESIRE TO REACH THE FOREIGN PRESS WITH A DEFENSE OF RTG ACTIONS. END SUMMARY
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2. ASKED WHAT THAILAND WAS DOING TO PREPARE FOR INVASION BY VIETNAMESE, WHICH HE HAD PREDICTED FOR FEB 15 (SEE REFS A, B, C), SAMAK REPEATED MUCH OF WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN REPORTED, BUT ADDED THAT IT IS HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO LET THE THAI PEOPLE KNOW THAT THERE IS A THREAT AGAINST

THEIR COUNTRY. SAMAK SAID THAT "INVASION" WAS NOT GOOD TERMINOLOGY FOR WHAT VIETNAMESE HAVE PLANNED. RATHER THEY WOULD THEMSELVES MAKE TROUBLE AMONG VIETNAMESE IN THAILAND, AND THEN, BLAMING RTG, USE THIS AS PRETEXT TO "INTRUDE" TO "PROTECT" THEIR NATIONALS. SAMAK SAID HE HAD RECEIVED REPORT CAPTURED FROM GUERRILLA CAMP WHICH HAD CONVINCED HIM HE SHOULD LET PEOPLE KNOW VIETNAMESE PLANS. HE COMMENTED THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY COULD DEAL WITH PROTOCOL, BUT MOI HAD TO FACE FREQUENT KILLINGS OF THAI OFFICIALS AND BURNINGS OF POLICE STATIONS. ALTHOUGH FORMER PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT HAD COMPARED HIM TO THE BOY WHO CRIED WOLF, SAMAK SAID THAT THERE WAS, IN FACT, A WOLF IN THE AREA. SAMAK SAID THE WORLD SHOULD TAKE NOTE THAT HE HAD DECLARED THE WOLF'S INTENTIONS, AND THE WORLD SHOULD ALSO REMEMBER THAT THOSE INTENTIONS HAD BEEN DENIED BY THE VIETNAMESE.

3. SAMAK WAS ASKED ABOUT THE ARREST OF A JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT FROM ASAHI SHIMBUN FOR NOT HAVING A WORK PERMIT. (ACCORDING TO THE BANGKOK POST, AKIRA IKRAI WAS ARRESTED AT HIS OFFICE ON DEC 16 BY POLICE ACCOMPANIED BY LABOR DEPT OFFICIALS AND LATER RELEASED ON 10,000 BAHT BAIL.) SAMAK SAID HE DID NOT KNOW DETAILS OF ARREST, BUT SAID PERHAPS IT WAS THE RESULT OF A MISUNDERSTANDING, SINCE NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT WORK PERMITS FOR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS HAD BEEN MADE. HE AGREED, HOWEVER, TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER.

4. IN REPLY TO QUESTION ABOUT PLANS FOR CARE OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES NEXT YEAR, SAMAK STATED THAT RTG WAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NEGOTIATING NEW BASIC AGREEMENT WITH UNHCR FOR SUPPORT OF CAMPS, BUT IN MEANTIME WAS OPERATING UNDER TEMPORARY AGREEMENT WHICH WOULD BE VALID UNTIL APRIL 30, 1977. SAMAK THEN LAUNCHED INTO LONG EXPLANATION OF EVENTS SURROUNDING REFOULEMENT OF 26 KHMER REFUGEES ON NOV 23 AND REITERATED RTG PLANS TO FORM INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE (RE D). SAMAK STRESSED THAT THAILAND WOULD ABIDE BY AGREEMENT WITH UNHCR THAT REFUGEES NOT REPEAT NOT BE FORCED TO RETURN HOME AGAINST THEIR WILL AND THAT PRIME MINISTER HAD SAID, UPON LEARNING OF REFOULEMENT, "THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN." SAMAK ASKED THAT OTHER COUNTRIES FEEL SOME SYMPATHY WITH THAILAND FOR THE BURDEN WHICH MORE THAN 76,000 REFUGEES REPRESENT AND ASSIST IN RESETTLING THEM IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

5. REGARDING THE EVENTS OF OCT 6, SAMAK SAID THAT FOREIGN PRESS REPORTING HAD BEEN EXAGGERATED AND QUOTED NEWSWEEK AS CALLING IT A "SAVAGE COUP" WHICH WAS "NOT

LIKE IT WAS." ACTS OF HANGING AND BURNING WERE NOT
"THE THAI STYLE." THAT OUTSIDERS WERE PRESENT AT
THAMMASAT COULD BE PROVEN BY THE BURNINGS AND BY THE FACT
THAT, WHEN POLICE WENT IN TO CLEAN OUT THAMMASAT AFTER
THE DISTURBANCES, THEY FOUND SHOES WHICH WERE NOT OF THAI
ORIGIN AND COOKED DOGS IN EATING POTS. HE ADDED THAT
THAI DO NOT REPEAT NOT EAT DOG MEAT AND SUGGESTED THIS
WAS EVIDENCE OF FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT.

6. COMMENT: SAMAK'S REMARKS WERE RAMBLING AND NOT
ALWAYS RESPONSIVE TO THE QUESTIONS ASKED. HIS ENGLISH
IN NOT ALWAYS FLUENT, FOR WHICH HE APOLOGIZED DURING THE
CLOSING REMARKS, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT HE HAD INITIATED
THE EXCHANGE WITH APPROACH TO THE FCCT SAYING THAT HE
WOULD LIKE TO GET TO KNOW SOME OF THE FOREIGN CORRESPON-
DENTS BETTER. THIS PROBABLY REPRESENTS SAMAK'S ATTEMPT
TO GAIN AN IMPROVED INTERNATIONAL PRESS FOR THE NEW RTG,
ALTHOUGH NOT EVERYBODY WOULD AGREE THAT HE IS THE MAN
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TO DO IT.
WHITEHOUSE

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